

Village of Trumansburg Deer Management Program for 2014

Activities on Approved Properties

Prepared by Bernd Blossey for the Village of Trumansburg

Approved by the Village of Trumansburg Board of Trustees September 8, 2014

For the past year and a half the Trumansburg Board of Trustees, in conjunction with Cornell's Integrated Deer Research and Management Program and the Village's Nuisance Wildlife Committee, has been involved in developing the Trumansburg Deer Management Program (TDMP). Based on input at two public informational meetings, over 10 years of experience of the Cornell Program on Cornell lands, input from the Villages of Lansing and Cayuga Heights on their deer management programs, and discussions with the NYSDEC Region 7, what follows we believe is the best approach to significantly reduce the deer population and negative impacts of the high deer level in the Village of Trumansburg.

Over many years the Village of Trumansburg has experienced high deer populations (about 100 animals) that have resulted in ecological and economic damage. The continued presence of this high deer population puts residents at an increased risk of Lyme disease, causes extensive plant damage, and creates an increased risk of deer-vehicle collisions. Village residents have responded by fencing and applying deterrents to valuable plantings to prevent browse, as well as rubbing damage to planted trees by buck. The Cayuga Nature Center is planning to fence the entire Smith Woods, which used to hold significant populations of spring wildflowers. But the costs associated with fencing and continued and increasing problems have reached a crises point.

After a public meeting this spring, the Village Board (based on input from the Nuisance Wildlife Committee and Cornell's program), has recommended the use of New York Department of Environmental Conservation approved Deer Depredation Permits (DDP's) also known as nuisance permits to reduce deer numbers. This approach was recommended by the village board on July 14, 2014 and is not considered regular hunting. The preferred method is using proficient bow hunters at baited locations with activities in the evening and using supplemental lights (until 11PM). The village has been advised to implement this method by Dr. Bernd Blossey (Associate Professor of Natural Resources and chair of Cornell's deer management committee) and Dr. Paul Curtis (Associate Professor of Natural Resources and an expert in Wildlife Damage and deer management, including sterilization). They base their recommendation on the experience over the last winter where use of this method resulted in a 45% reduction in the campus deer population.

We anticipate using 5-7 properties in the village to begin implementation of the deer management program starting mid-September 2014. A deer management oversight committee will be formed and will review properties across the village that are ideal

locations given their size, expected deer traffic, availability of trees and cover, and location. What follows is detailed information on the TDMP.

1. Activities are anticipated to occur from 16 September 2014 to the end of December 2014. The Village of Trumansburg Village Deer Management Oversight Committee will review the success of the program and will reduce or expand activities as needed based on deer harvests. All landowners will be kept informed about management activities (including who are the participants on their property) in regular updates. It is anticipated that only Friday and Saturday evenings will be used followed by a five-day resting period.
2. Tree stands will be placed (no screw in steps, ladder stands are preferred) at landowner approved locations in mid September. A few branches may need to be trimmed to improve shooting lanes. Shooting from elevated positions directs arrows into the ground after passing through a deer. Seven to ten days before activities are to begin, bait (corn) will be placed about 20 yards away from tree stands to attract deer to these locations. Trail monitoring cameras may be installed to capture deer activity. If needed, locations may need to be shifted slightly or abandoned. Each landowner will be informed about any activities on their properties, as indicated by landowner preferences.
3. A small group of proficient participants will be selected. Participants will be using compound bows or cross bows exclusively. The activities are coordinated by Merritt Compton (local but internationally renowned bow hunting expert) and he is assisted by Bernd Blossey (also coordinator of the Village of Lansing deer management program) and Phil Carubia as part of the Village of Trumansburg Village Deer Management Oversight Committee.
4. Activities will occur only in the evenings starting at about 1-2 hours before sunset and continue until after dark (until 11PM, as per NYSDEC regulations) depending on deer use patterns. This approach captures high deer activity periods. Use of supplemental red lights after dark will allow for safe, highly accurate shots at very close range. All participants will either have experience using this approach or will be trained. Deer use patterns at bait will be monitored using infrared trail cameras to target the best possible times to utilize locations.
5. All participants are required to follow all village and state laws, or expressed landowner preferences. It is the right of each landowner to restrict the number of individuals on their property, the times or dates participants are allowed on properties, stand location, parking locations or access routes as desired by each landowner. The agreement to use properties can be terminated by landowners at any time by notifying the village clerk.
6. Which days and stands will be used cannot be predicted in advance, as this will depend on individual time schedules, wind direction, weather and previous use of

stand locations. To prevent overuse, the use of resting periods of 1-2 weeks between activity periods will allow deer to fall back into their usual use patterns. Baiting will likely continue during the resting periods.

7. Participants will be in trees using camouflage and will use flashlights to locate shot deer or to walk out of the woods; therefore landowners may notice a slow moving flashlight. If deer can't be readily retrieved due to poor blood trails, approved tracking dogs are available to help in locating wounded deer. In very rare circumstances tracking may occur the next morning with better light. Landowners will be alerted to any of these possibilities and will have access to cell phone numbers of participants.
8. Occasionally a mortally wounded deer may run beyond property boundaries. All participants will have information about property boundaries when afield. This information will include phone numbers of landowners and neighbors who need to be notified if a search extends beyond the approved properties. If necessary, hunters will call and ask permission to retrieve a deer unless we have pre-authorization to retrieve deer from a property. All immediate neighbors will also be informed of these activities, regardless of whether a deer ever leaves an approved property.
9. Participants will keep track of and report all arrows shot using a secure website. Arrows usually pass through deer and fall close to the spot where a deer was hit, but occasionally will remain in the deer. Every effort will be made to retrieve arrows (they are expensive), where needed aided with the help of a metal detector.
10. All shot deer will be removed discretely and not be field dressed on properties. Samples of internal organs and blood will be submitted to the Animal Health Diagnostic Center, Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, to assist in various research projects.
11. All harvested deer will be consumed by participants or donated. We are currently exploring options to allow storage in the village in a refrigerated mobile unit. The collected deer would then be dropped off at an approved venison donation processor for distribution to local food banks and pantries.
12. In most instances, landowners and neighbors will not even notice activities or the killing of a deer because it happens quietly and fast. However, despite all precautions and skills, deer may be wounded, may not expire immediately, collapse on neighboring properties or may not be found. We will make every attempt possible (including the use of a trained dog) to recover all animals or assure that they will be fine (superficial arrow wounds heal quickly).
13. The village deer management oversight committee will review activities and success in regular intervals (weekly) and determine if activities should continue or be terminated based on activities and number of deer harvested.

14. The deer management oversight committee will provide regular updates to the village board, including the number of deer harvested, which will also be posted on the village website.
15. The goal is to reduce deer numbers to levels where forest regeneration and survival of browse sensitive plants within the Village of Trumansburg is once again possible. In addition, we aim to reduce or maintain deer tick populations at levels where Lyme disease risks are minimized (5-8 deer per square kilometer according to recent studies in CT). With assistance from Cornell Universities Department of Natural Resources the ecological success of deer reductions in the village will be assessed using oak sentinels, a method developed by Bernd Blossey. To assess tick populations we will use standardized tick sampling using drag cloths. We will also assess tick loads on harvested deer.
16. Given the high deer densities and the articulated ecological and health goals, we propose to target both antlered and antlerless deer. This requires approval by the DEC. Participants shooting bucks will be required to saw off antlers and antlers will be delivered to the DEC. In our permit application to the DEC, we propose to allow participants to take one antlered buck and retain the antlers if they take at least 5 additional deer. It is anticipated that this approach creates an incentive to continue removing deer, which has been a problem in the Cornell and Village of Lansing programs. But this contingent on approval by the DEC and not a certainty.

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